THE NEW PLAYS

"Diana of Dobson's" More Shopworn than Shopgirlish.

BY CHARLES DARNTON.

"DIANA of Dobson's," at the Savoy Theatre on Saturday night, only went to show that one manager could make two mistakes. Any one could see after the first act that Miss Cicely Hamilton's drearily British "romantic comedy" was not the play for an American audience, and even earlier it became apparent that Miss Carlotta Nillson was not the actress for the title role.

"Diana of Dobson's" soon betrayed the fact that it was more shopworn than shopgirlish. The agitator's tendency to talk shop of the Socialistic sort was chiefly responsible for bringing the play to dismal failure. Miss Hamilton would have done well to inject some of the briskness of her beloved suffragette movement into her play. Instead, she seemed a Bernard Shaw in petticoats—without that lively Socialist's brilliancy, but with his incorrigible habit of voicing ideas through conversationally inclined characters. "The great American play" is no less illusive than the great "labor play." The authors who have tried their hand at it would make a fair sized Labor Day parade. English playwrights seem particularly interested in the subject—and it's not a bad sign of the times. Shaw tried to show the position of the laborer in "Major Barbara," but his dialectics merely went to one's head. Charles Rann Kennedy in "The Servant in the House" managed to reach the heart, if not the head. Miss Hamilton fails to do either, because she knows a great deal less about playwriting than about labor—and she seems to have a rather foggy idea of both. Worse still, she turns the labor question into sentimental nonsense.

Carlotta Nillson as Diana Massingberd.

Unfortunately for the English author, "Girls" had taken the first blush of the undressing scene and the five little beds in the dormitory of the draper's shop, and so while there was ordinary human interest in the corset-cover acting of Miss Beatrice Moreland, Miss Mildred Morris and other "assistants," Miss Nillson's bare-armed defiance of Dobson's forewoman, and the whole Dobson establishment, for that matter, sounded more "temperamental" than courageous. Diana had received a legacy of £300, and she was going to leave her little bed in the morning to be a "lady" as long as the money lasted.

If those five little beds had been distributed among the audience after the first act, Mr. Frohman would doubtless have made some lifelong friends. One man snored vigorously in his orchestra chair, but his rest was broken by a distressed companion who nudged him from time to time, and whispered: "Wake up! Here comes something."

How any one could sleep through Miss Ffolliott Paget's acting was a mystery. Miss Paget hammered away at the part of a British matron who believed Diana to be a rich widow and was bent upon capturing "Mrs." Massingberd for her nephew, Capt. the Hon. Victor Bretherton. Diana was climbing the social Alps in Switzerland, and Capt. Bretherton, who was stammering through life on £600 a year, thought her worth while. To make this clear to the audience, his noisy aunt hummed the "Merry Widow" waltz. Help!

Diana got part of her money's worth by turning down an offer of marriage from a self-made and self-satisfied merchant in whose shop she had once worked. Incidentally she told him what she thought of employers who get rich at the expense of their poorly paid employees. Then, just as she was going to pack her trunk and say good-by to her "one crowded hour of glorious life," Capt. Bretherton stopped her to inquire whether she thought she could put up with him as a husband. But when she confessed she was only a penniless shopgirl he complained that she had deceived him. While he was stammering indignantly, Diana took advantage of the opportunity to tell him what she thought of him.

They next met three months later upon the Thames embankment at 3 o'clock on a foggy morning. The author brought them to the same bench. Both were carrying the banner of the unemployed. Capt. Bretherton was out at the toes and Diana was out at the fingers. They were romantically poverty-stricken. The gentleman hobo explained that he had taken Diana's cruel words to heart. She had told him he was useless, that he couldn't earn his living. He had been trying it for three months. She was right. He was n. g.

In that moment they grew closer to each other. There was no longer any social gulf between them—only a poor old woman who needed sleep. The gentleman-hobo went on to say that he still had his income. He didn't have it with him, but he borrowed a shilling from a "bobby" who had served under him, and with it bought food and drink. Diana and he grew quite jolly as they swallowed their coffee and chewed their "doorsteps" (cockney for sandwiches). And then they took a walk.

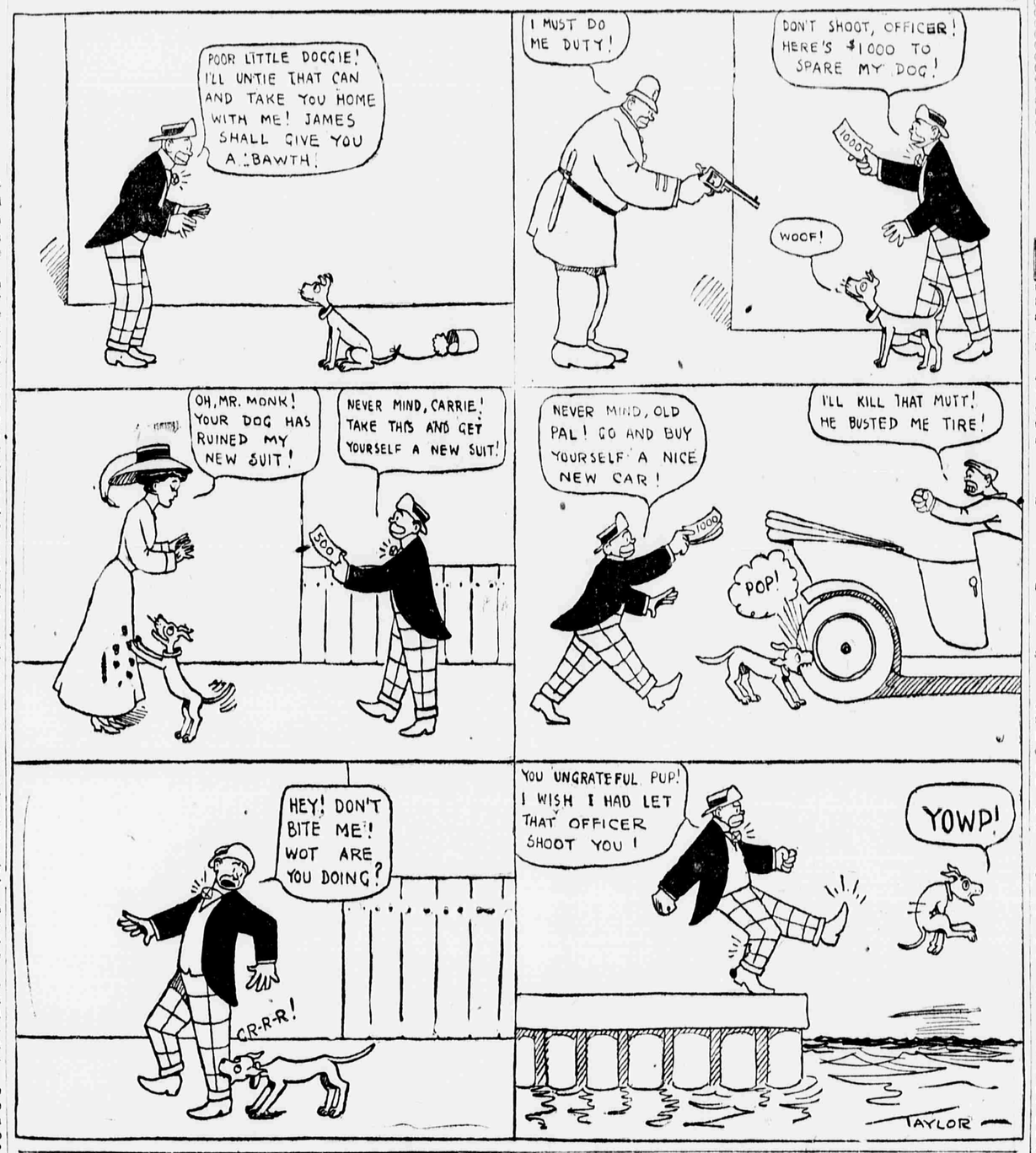
She had "played" rich and he had "played" poor. The author worked it both ways. "Romance" to Miss Hamilton is a very simple matter. Miss Nillson tried very hard to enter into the lovely scheme, but everything was against her. She neither looked nor acted like a girl who would spend her little fortune in one wild fling. She never suggested the fun of the thing. She didn't seem to be having the time of her life in Switzerland, even when she had a chance to speak her mind. Miss Lena Ashwell probably did better in London. Miss Rose Stahl would do better in a better play of the same kind here. Miss Stahl has deviltry in her. Miss Nillson hasn't.

Miss Nillson has won an enviable position on the stage by her unflinching sincerity and her peculiarly sensitive interpretation of appealing, shrinking femininity. The submerged spirit of Mrs. Elvsted, the helpless pathos of Letty, and the unshaken patience of Rhy in "The Three of Us," were all within her powers. But Diana is more than a crushed shopgirl. She is a true sport—but Miss Nillson doesn't put a drop of sporting blood into her veins. She makes you feel that Diana would put her legacy into her stocking instead of "blowing it in" on a month's spree. For the first time, too, affectation seems to have crept into Miss Nillson's work.

Mr. Richard Bennett played the stammering Bretherton surprisingly well. He behaved like a gentleman in distress. He was almost as stupid and colorless as the play itself.

The Million Dollar Kid

By R. W. Taylor



Monologues of a Mixologist

By Clarence L. Cullen.

Author of "Tales of Ex-Tanks."

No. 25 of the Series.

Yes, Agatha, We Just Loathe Automobiles—Except When We're Riding in 'Em.

CLARENCE L. CULLEN

MAYBE you remember how I used to paw the dirt like a he-moose at horn-shedding time whenever I started in to unravel about motor bugs and speed maniacs and auriferous automobile bums who thought they owned the streets of this man's town, and how I wanted them all sentenced to Sing Sing or to the Florence Crittenton Mission for life, and how I hankered to sprinkle powered glass on their peche Melbas so that they could die the appropriate death of cut-ups—and other ravings like that?

Recollect how I used to shake da-da with the bunched maulies at the phut-phut phaetons as they reeked by here, and how I'd bark and woof-woof at 'em, and bawl around about their hogging all the pavements with their grease gigs, and about how the people that drove 'em ought to be boarded up in the bastinado box for the rest of their naturals, and a lot more E-flat enunciations like that?

Different now. Dee-cidedly different now, Dorothea. This being Presidential year, and the open season for floppers, I've flopped. You can't pan automobilists in front of me now without getting a rise to the bait that'll make you think a deep-sea manatee has munched the hook and has started to tow your catamaran to the Canary Islands.

You don't have to write out the answer and mail it to the Puzzle Department. It's easy. There's a reason. I'm almost an automobilist now myself. I am nearly going to own a car. And I am approximately going to drive it when I get it. I won't blurt out, just like that, that I'm now a booster for the burn-the-roads Beelzebubs that own the bug barouches, but we nicked off forty-two nautical knots an hour down around Huntington last night in an air-cooled car, and I guess perhaps that wasn't making the chickens and the guinea hens along the road take to the fronded foliage.

We only missed by an eighth of an inch a doddering old dame who was doganing across the road with a little girl in her arms, but what did she mean by crossing the road at a quarter past seven, anyhow?

A shrivelled little old man, packing a spade and a rake and a hoe—a gardener, maybe, or some such rough stuff—caused us to turn out of our trail all of three inches in order to keep from staking him to a morgue hair cut—but what right have those members of the working classes got, anyhow, to be mooching along the motorists' roads?

Trouble with you dill-lidded pedestrians is that you don't know how to walk. You go slouching along like a lot of locoed 'longshoremen, looking around for automobiles as if you're afraid to die, when you sure ought to be juggins to it by this time that we've all got to die some time. You knockers of us motorists seem to think that we want to hit you. But we don't at all. We'd just as leave not hit you as not. Only, keep moving, that's all. Keep your moccasins off the ground. We don't want to lift you from the concrete for a quick cash-in, because that stuff disarranges the machinery and is wearing on the tires; but keep out of the way, that's all.

I've noticed ever since I became an automobilit—yes, Yolande, that was last Friday week—how you people mope along in the way of automobiles, trying to make us jab you in the kidneys so that we'll get our gear all out of whack, when, as a matter of fact, you ought to be at home in your hall rooms, practising your violin, or writing letters to the Fudge editor, asking him how to succeed at literature and if babies teeth before or after they're weaned, and why.

Why, a couple of days ago I actually saw an ignorant, crusty-tempered middle-aged man shake his fist at an automobile. I was in the automobile at the time. Y'see, his hat had blown off, right in the middle of our path in upper Broadway, and he was just stooping over to pick it up, with his back to us, when we gave him a little push from the rear, severing, I believe, a couple of his suspender buttons. That elderly man was unreasonable enough to expect us to swerve fully two or three feet from our trail just in order to permit him to pick up his blown-down tent, and when he picked himself up he positively da-da'd his clinched digits at us—such peevishness, the idea! He had no right to allow his hat to blow off, but when it did he ought to've let it stay where it was, for the hat wouldn't have interfered with automobile traffic, and he did.

We motorists observe that women, particularly, become perturbed and petulant when, in grazing them, we happen to remove a little passementerie or V-yoking or something from their attire, and we sure do lament their inconsideration, I sculk.

How's that? Oh, well, you can can that casting up, Carlos. Maybe I did say, away back a couple of weeks ago, that I'd never seen an automobilist that wore a hat bigger than a four and three-eighths. But that was before I got the yen-yen to own an automobile.

-:- Josephine Nye -:-

A Woman Who Is Funny

By Special Arrangement She Writes Exclusively for The Evening World

Our Public Benefactors

JOSEPHINE NYE.

DO you know—a man, or a woman, or a child who can get up a new riddle, or work off an old one that has been sponged and pressed, so that the got-it-cheap and the slick-and-shiny look doesn't squeal on you when you spring it, is a public benefactor? It's the truth.

The other day I was perusing a book called "Verse." This verse was built by one of our foremost architects of the modern lyric, and I shut the thing up, and I laid the thing down, and I said:

"When is a poet NOT a poet?"

Answer: "About nine-tenths of the time."

Uproarious laughter!

Then I tried it again.

Why is Russia like a grape-fruit?

Because it has very bitter Jews in it.

Cries of, "Ain't it awful, Mabel?" and "Hire a hall!" from the crowd.

When is an airship not an airship?

When it's a wreck.

Mirth, here, should be tactfully subdued. The riddle is—I know—wildly funny—ungovernably funny, but very boisterous laughter would not be counted as de rigueur at this point. The audience is requested NOT to laugh immoderately

Those who are not prepared to be ladies and gentlemen may leave their seats.

Let me resume:

Why is Elinor Glyn like a quarter?

Answer: She won't last but a minute.

I regret having to pause again, but the demonstrations are bordering on the unseemly.

Question—Why is William Jennings Bryan?

Answer—He isn't.

Now, although these are rare and priceless jewels of the riddlemaker's most delicate craftsmanship, although they are recherche, they are content to serve as a stimulus, an inspiration to those who may attempt to parallel their succinct wit. As our own good Emerson says, "Hitch your wagon to a star."

Though your riddles may not be as ravishingly funny as my own, do not despair.

We cannot all be Thucydideses, nor Aristophaneses, nor Demostheneses, but we can all do our best. We can all hand down to posterity SOMETHING bearing the imprimature of our best selves. No one knows what good you may do with your little riddle.

Years and years did I flourish and draw sweet sustenance from "Why does a chicken cross the road?"

At last some cruel being—and there are such—who are always maliciously revealing the inmost life of some unsuspecting victim, unblushingly and without a pang of regret at snatching aside so ruthlessly the curtain that had hidden this life secret from me—broke the news. It was so that she—yes, it was a lady chicken—so that she could get on the other side.

Perhaps, in the Divine Law of Justice, or, as our great speakers have said, until they say it in their sleep—perhaps IN THE LAST ANALYSIS—this may be proven to have been right. To me it was one of the cruelest blows I have ever received. I have felt myself failing steadily ever since. Though it is a bitter thing to face I know that I shall never—never be the same again.

Even the sunset reminds me of that hen—but she is immortal—her son never sets—why grieve?

Right here, let me say this:

Avoid shock in the case of a riddle whenever possible.

If you have a little new riddle in the house that has puzzled you through the day, do not go to its crib and rudely wake it if the answer comes suddenly to you in the night. Remember when you yourself were a cunning little enigma.

Wait! Wait!

The Bug-Faced Woman

OH, yes, you know her just as well as you know your own name!

She's the woman who drags her child along the street by one arm and you have to hold your breath and look the other way for fear the arm will come out of the socket.

She's the woman who invariably says spring and fall as if she had HYDROPHOBIA.

She's the woman who invariably says the meanest thing she can think of to you as a matter of DUTY, particularly if you are another woman and it concerns your looks.

She's the woman whose RELIC affects her like PRICKLY HEAT—and who says THE ARMY CANTEEN SHOULD BE FILLED WITH WATER.

She's the woman whose soul under a microscope in the laboratory of Dr. Baraduc would appear as an infinitesimally small spatter of grey-green, with dark red spots in it.

But GIVE HER TIME!

GIVE HER TIME.

Nobody would ever think to see a little mean hard acorn that after a while you'd find a great generous oak grown out of it, and everybody grateful.

She drags her child by the arm.

Give her time!

P. S.—I mention the oak and the acorn in this connection as they have been used so little for comparisons of this kind.

I do hate hackneyed things.

A Revelation of New York Society

THE YOUNGER SET

By Robert W. Chambers,

Author of "The Firing Line" and "A Fighting Chance."

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALMENTS.

Capt. Philip Selwyn, whose wife Alixe had divorced him to marry Jack Ruthven, returns to New York to visit his sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Austin Gerard. The family consists of a ward, Eileen Errol, and four children. Selwyn has left the Army.

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CHAPTER I.

(Continued.)

His Own People.

AUSTIN said as they reached the nursery door: "Funny thing, feminine vanity—almost pathetic, isn't it? • • • Don't make too much noise! • • • What do you think of that pair of legs, Phil?—and he's not yet five. • • • And I want to speak frankly; did you ever see anything to beat that bunch of infants? Not because they're ours and we happen to be your own people"—he checked himself and the smile faded as he laid his big ruddy hand on Selwyn's shoulder—"your own people, Phil. Do you understand? • • • And if I have not ventured to say anything about—what has happened—you understand that, too, don't you? You know I'm just as loyal to you as Nina is—as it is natural and fitting that your own people should be. Only a man finds it difficult to convey his—his"——

"Don't say 'sympathies!'" cut in Selwyn nervously.

"I wasn't going to, confound you! was going to say 'sentiments.' I'm sorry I said anything. Go to the deuce!"

Selwyn did not even deign to glance around at him. "You big red-pepper box," he muttered affectionately, "you'll wake up Drina. Look at her in her cunning pajamas! Oh, but she is a darling, Austin. And look at that boy with his two white bears! He's a corker! He's a wonder—honestly, Austin. As for that Josephine kid she can have me on demand; I'll answer to voice, whistle, or hand. • • • I say, ought we to go away and leave Winthrop's thumb in his mouth?"

"I guess I can get it out without waking him," whispered Gerard. A moment later he accomplished the office, leaned down and drew the bed-covers closer to Drina's dimpled chin, then grasped Selwyn above the elbow in sudden alarm: "If that trained terror, Miss Paisely, finds us in here when she comes from dinner, we'll both catch it! Come on; I'll turn off the light. Anyway, we ought to have been dressed long ago; but you insisted on butting in here."

In the hallway below they encountered a radiant and bewildering vision awaiting them; Eileen, in all her glory.

"Wonderful!" said Gerard, patting the vision's rounded bare arm as he hurried past—"fine gown! fine girl!—but I've got to dress and so has Philip"—— He meant well.

"Do you like it, Captain Selwyn?" asked the girl, turning to confront him, where he had halted. "Gerald isn't coming and—I thought perhaps you'd be interested"——

The formal, half-patronizing compliment on his tongue's tip remained there unsaid. He stood silent, touched by the faint under-ringing wistfulness in laughing voice that challenged his opinion; and something within him responded in time:

"Your gown is a beauty; such wonderful lace. Of course, anybody would know it came straight from Paris or from some other celestial region"——

"But it didn't!" cried the girl, delighted. "It looks it, doesn't it? But it was made by Letellier! Is there anything you don't like about it, Captain Selwyn? Anything?"

"Nothing," he said solemnly; "it is as adorable as the girl inside it, who makes it look like a Parisian importation from Paradise!"

She colored enchantingly, and with pretty, frank impulse held out both her hands to him:

"You are a dear, Captain Selwyn! It is my first real dinner gown and I'm quite mad about it; and somehow I wanted the family to share my madness with me. Nina will—she gave it to me, the darling. Austin admires it, too, of course, but he doesn't notice such things very closely; and Gerald isn't here. • • • Thank you for letting me show it to you before I go down."

She gave both his hands a friendly little shake and, glancing down at her skirt in blissful consciousness of its perfection, stepped backward into her own room.

Later, while he stood at his dresser constructing an immaculate knot in his white tie, Nina knocked.

"Hurry, Phil! Oh, may I come in? • • • You ought to be downstairs with us, you know. • • • And it was very sweet of you to be so nice to Eileen. The child had tears in her eyes when I went in. Oh, just a single diamond drop in each eye; your sympathy and interest did it. • • • I think the child misses her father on an occasion such as this—the beginning of life—the first step out into the world. Men do not understand what it means to us; Gerald doesn't, I'm sure. I've been watching her, and I know the shadow of that dreadful tragedy falls on her more often than Austin and I are aware of. • • • Shall I fix that tie for you, dear? • • • Certainly I can; Austin won't let a man touch him. • • • There, Phil. • • • Wait! • • • Now, if you are decently grateful you'll tell me I look well. Do I? Really? Nonsense, I don't look twenty; but—say it, Phil. Ah, that clever maid of mine knows some secrets—never mind!—but Drina thinks I'm a beauty. • • • Come, dear; and thank you for being kind to Eileen. One's own kin counts so much in this world. And when a girl has none, except a useless brother, little things like that mean a lot to her." She turned, her hand falling on his sleeve. "You are among your own people, anyhow!"

His own people! The impatient tenderness of his sister's words had been sounding in his ears all through the evening. They rang out clear and insistent amid the gay tumult of the dinner; he heard them in the laughing confusion of youthful voices; they stole into the delicate undertones of the music to mock him; the rustling of silk and lace repeated them; the high heels of satin slippers echoed them in irony.

His own people!

The scent of overheated flowers, the sudden warm breeze eddying from a capricious fan, the mourning thrill of the violins emphasized the emphasis of the words.

And they sounded sadder and more meaningless now to him, here in his own room, until the monotony of their recurrent mockery began to unnerve him.

He turned on the electricity, shrank from it, extinguished it. And for a long time he sat there in the darkness of early morning, his unfilled pipe clutched in his nerveless hand.

CHAPTER II.

A Dream Ends.

TO pick up once more and tighten and knot together the loosened threads which represented the unfinished record that his race had woven into the social fabric of the metropolis was merely an automatic matter for Selwyn.

His own people had always been among the makers of that fabric. Into part of its vast and intricate pattern they had woven an inconspicuously honorable record—chronicles of births and death and marriages, a plain memorandum of plain living, and upright dealing with their fellow men.

Some public service of modest nature they had performed, not seeking it, not shirking; accomplishing it cleanly when it was intrusted to them.

His forefathers had been, as a rule, professional men—physicians and lawyers; his grandfather died under the walls of Chapultepec Castle while twisting a tourniquet for a cursing dragoon; an uncle remained indefinitely at Malvern Hill; an only brother at Montauk Point having sickened in the trenches before Santiago.

His father's services as division medical officer in Sheridan's cavalry had been, perhaps, no more devoted, no more loyal than the services of thousands of officers and troopers; and his reward was a pension offer, declined. He practised until his wife died, then retired to his country home, from which house his daughter Nina was married to Austin Gerard.

Mr. Selwyn, senior, continued to pay his taxes on his father's house in Tenth street, voted in that district, spent a month every year with the Gerards, read a Republican newspaper, and judiciously enlarged the family reservation in Greenwood, whither he retired, in due time.

The first gun of the Florida Keys sent Selwyn's only brother from his law office in hot haste to San Antonio—the first etape on his first and last campaign with Wood's cavalry.

That same gun interrupted Selwyn's connection with Neergard & Co., operators in Long Island real estate; and a year later the captaincy offered him in a Western volunteer regiment operating on the Island of Leyte, completed the rupture.

• • •

And now he was back again, a chance career ended, with option of picking up the severed threads—his inheritance at the loom—and of retying them, warped and weft, and continuing the pattern according to the designs of the tufted, tinted pile-yarn plotted in by his ancestors before him.

There was nothing else to do; so he did it. Civil and certain social obligations were mechanically resumed; he appeared in his sister's pew for worship, he re-enrolled in his clubs as a resident member once more; the directors of such charities as he medded with he notified of his return; he remitted his dues to the various museums and municipal or private organizations which had always expected support from his family.

He was more conservative, however, in mending the purely social strands so long relaxed or severed. The various registers and blue-books recorded his residence under "dilatory domiciles;" he did not subscribe to the opera, preferring to chance it in case harmony-hunger attacked him. Yuletide functions he dodged, considering that his sister's days in January and attendance at other family formalities were sufficient.

Meanwhile he was looking for two things—an apartment and a job—the first energetically combated by his immediate family.

It was rather odd—the scarcity of jobs. Of course, Austin offered him one which Selwyn declined at once, comfortably enraging his brother-in-law for nearly ten minutes.

"But what do I know about the investment of trust funds?" demanded Selwyn. "You wouldn't take me if I were not your wife's brother—and that's nepotism."

Austin's harmless fury raged for nearly ten minutes, after which he cheered up, relighted his cigar, and resumed his discussion with Selwyn concerning the merits of various boys' schools—the victim in prospect being Billy.

A little later, reverting to the subject of his own enforced idleness, Selwyn said: "I've been on the point of going to see Neergard—but somehow I can't quite bring myself to it—slinking into his office as a rank failure in one profession, to ask him if he has any use for me again."

"Stuff and fancy!" growled Gerard; "it's all stuff and fancy about your being any kind of a failure. If you want to resume with that Dutchman, go to him and say so. If you want to invest anything in his schemes he'll take you in fast enough. He took in Gerald and some twenty thousand."

Selwyn reflected: "I believe I'd go and see Neergard if I were perfectly sure of my personal sentiments toward him. . . . He's been civil enough to me, of course, but I have always had a curious feeling about Neergard—that he's for ever on the edge of doing something doubtful"——

"His business reputation is all right. He shaves the dead line like a safety razor, but he's never yet cut through it. On principle, however, look out for an apple-faced Dutchman with a thin nose and no lips. Personally my feeling is this: if I've got to play games with Julius Neergard, I'd prefer to be his partner. And so I told Gerald. By the way"——

Austin checked himself, looked down at his cigar, turned it over and over several times, then continued quietly:

"By the way, I suppose Gerald is like other young men of his age and times—immersed in his own affairs—thoughtless perhaps, perhaps a trifle foolish in the cross-country gallop after pleasure. . . . I was rather severe with him about his neglect of his sister. He ought to have come here to pay his respects to you, too"——

"Oh, don't put such notions into his head"——

"Yes, I will!" insisted Austin; "however indifferent and thoughtless and selfish he is to other people, he's got to be considerate toward his own family. And I told him so. Have you seen him lately?"

"N-o," admitted Selwyn.

(To Be Continued.)